

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### CertiRestore Certified Furniture Restoration

#### North Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership

#### Restoring the Past for the Future

##### Client Profile:

CertiRestore Certified Furniture Restoration, located in Fargo, North Dakota, was founded in 2003 by Bob and Kristi Mitchell. CertiRestore uses a unique process to restore and repair damaged wooden furniture, offering customers a 50-year warranty on service. Bob's inspiration for this business began with a love for antiques and the art of furniture restoration. He was so frustrated with the lack of information and technology for restoring and repairing furniture that he spent many years developing new products and systems. His improvements include new repair and refinish techniques, a system which can match existing finish colors exactly, and a chemical-free system of removing paint and clear finishes. CertiRestore employs 6 people.

##### Situation:

In addition to restoring wooden furniture, the CertiRestore business develops and manufactures specialized wood pliers, nail and screw removal kits. As a result, the workplace became quite dirty, disorganized, smelly (chemical smells), and generally, not a pleasant place to work or for a customer to visit. Bob originally worked with Linda Liebert-Hall, of the North Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NDMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, when she was with the Fargo Small Business Development Center program. She helped Bob and Kristie develop a business plan and acquire a working capital loan. Once again, they turned to the NDMEP for assistance.

##### Solution:

CertiStore Vice President Bob Mitchell attended an MEP/SBDC Lean Manufacturing 101 class, with a follow up by a MEP/SBDC consultant. The consultant assisted Bob with layout and production issues, controlling inventory and overhead costs, and expanded on the lean manufacturing concepts. The CertiRestore business has grown and expanded into a new building which was designed with the customer, franchisee, and employee in mind. Bob has created a significantly more professional image using lean concepts, such as 5S and Visual Factory principles. Over the last year, two full-time and two part-time employees have been trained to use many of the improvements Bob learned while working with the MEP organization

##### Results:

- \* Increased sales by 72 percent.
- \* Improved work flow and productivity of employees.
- \* Invested 30 percent of sales into new equipment, workforce practices and skills, and other business improvements.
- \* Anticipated increased investment in employee skill development with additional Lean training.
- \* Shortened new employee training by 50 percent.

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### Testimonial:

"The Dakota MEP has helped us to improve our business in several ways; most notably our efficiency, training and profitability. Their lean manufacturing class revolutionized the way we run our shop and do our training. We have been able to teach untrained employees to produce professional results in one-half the time, which impacts our bottom line quickly. We plan on sending more of our employees to a lean manufacturing class in the near future. Continuous improvement has become a daily Mantra in our company. The furniture repair business has had a poor reputation for professionalism over the years. By applying many of the things we have learned from The Dakota MEP we have been able to create a more professional working environment for our employees, customers and our franchisees. We have created a bright, clean, well organized environment. Thanks for all the help, Dakota MEP; we could not have done this without you."

Bob Mitchell, Vice President